

Remarks

Applicants thank the Examiner for the careful examination of the present case, and present the following remarks in response to the Office Action of July 11, 2006. In this Amendment and Response, claims 9 and 22 have been amended. No claims have been added or canceled. No new matter has been added, with the amendments to the claims fully supported in the remarks below. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the present application in view of the above amendments and the following remarks.

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 102

The Office Action rejected claims 9, 10, 12, and 22-25 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by Esparza (U.S. Patent No. 4,688,966). Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection of these claims.

Applicants note that independent claims 9 and 22 now require an arrangement of discrete restraint zones in a spaced apart relationship. Specifically, claim 9 now recites “each restraint face comprising a discontinuous face defined by a plurality of restraint zones.” Claim 22 now recites “each restraint means comprising a plurality of discrete restraint zones disposed so as to be spaced along the elongate structure.” Applicants assert that Esparza does not disclose at least this element of these independent claims.

Esparza does not disclose a device as recited in either of claims 9 or 22, as requiring “each restraint face comprising a discontinuous face defined by a plurality of restraint zones” (claim 9) or “each restraint means comprising a plurality of discrete restraint zones disposed so as to be spaced along the elongate structure” (claim 22). Esparza discloses a device 6 used in moving a pipe through a J-tube riser with less force than would otherwise be required. See Esparza, Abstract. The device 6 is provided for the purposes of applying a lateral bending force to the pipeline 10, with the device 6 undergoing a cyclical vertical motion to facilitate movement of the pipeline 10 into the J-tube. Esparza does not disclose a plurality of restraint zones as required by claims 9 and 22, in that the device 6 is the only restraint disclosed. Further, Esparza is generally related to installation of pipelines which extend upwardly from a sea floor; it is unrelated to limiting lateral movement of a submarine elongate structure. Therefore, Esparza cannot anticipate either of these claims.

For at least the above reason, Applicants assert that claims 9 and 22 are not anticipated by Esparza. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of these claims.

Claims 10 and 12 depend from claim 9, and claims 23-25 depend from claim 22. These dependent claims therefore inherit all of the limitations of the claims from which they depend, and are not anticipated as well. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of these claims as well.

There may be additional reasons why one or more of the claims as presented are not anticipated by Esparza. Applicants reserve the right to make additional arguments at a later time, as appropriate, as to the allowability of the claims.

Conclusion

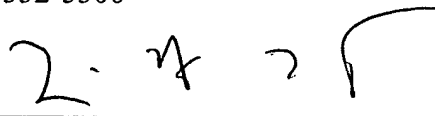
In view of the above amendments and remarks, Applicant respectfully requests a Notice of Allowance. If the Examiner has any questions regarding this Amendment and Response or believes a telephone conference would advance the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicants' representative Brian H. Batzli at 612.336.4755.

Respectfully submitted,

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Dated: 9 January 2007

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